

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /059 W

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P R 050959Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3318

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 18655

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: ASUKATA FINALLY ACCEPTS CANDIDACY FOR SOCIALIST PARTY

REF: TOKYO 15109

SUMMARY: AFTER REFUSING REQUESTS FROM SEVERAL JAPAN
SOCIALIST PARTY (JSP) LEADERS TO ACCEPT CHAIRMANSHIP OF
STRIKE-RIDDEN PARTY, YOKOHAMA MAYOR ASUKATA MADE DRAMATIC
REVERSAL AND FINALLY ACCEPTED ON DECEMBER 3. SINCE THEY
HAVE NO SERIOUS RIVAL TO PROPOSE, PARTY'S MODERATE FACTIONS
WILL PROBABLY NOT CONTEST ASUKATA'S ELECTION. WITH
BATTLE OVER CHAIRMANSHIP APPARENTLY OVER, FOCUS OF JSP'S
LEFT-VS-RIGHT STRUGGLE WILL SHIFT TO SECRETARY-GENERALSHIP.
END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH MAYOR ASUKATA HAD REBUFFED EACH OF SEVERAL
EARLIER REQUESTS TO BECOME CHAIRMAN, OUTGOING JSP CHAIRMAN
NARITA PERSEVERED AND FINALLY GOT HIM TO ACCEPT ON DEC 3.
(ASUKATA HAD WITHDRAWN HIS CANDIDACY FOR CHAIRMANSHIP
IN WAKE OF DEFECTION OF HIDEO DEN AND TWO OTHER
MODERATES AT JSP'S CONVENTION IN SEPTEMBER.) CHAIRMAN
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NARITA, SOHYO CHAIRMAN MAKIEDA AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS
STILL FELT ASUKATA WAS ONLY MAN WHO COULD HOLD PARTY
TOGETHER AND WORKED ON HIM ALL THROUGH OCTOBER AND
NOVEMBER TO RECONSIDER.

2. ASUKATA CONTINUED TO REJECT THEIR PLEAS, HOWEVER,
BUT NOT DEFINITELY. AS PRESSURE BUILT UP, HE LEFT

JAPAN ON NOV 21 TO VISIT VIETNAM AND LAOS (SEPTTEL), RETURNING DEC 1. STILL PROTESTING HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO BECOME CHAIRMAN, HE AGREED TO MEET AGAIN WITH NARITA ON DEC 3, WHEN HORDE OF NEWSMEN WAS ON HAND TO RECORD ASUKATA'S DRAMATIC CHANGE OF HEART AND NARITA'S DELIGHTED SMILES. ASUKATA'S ACCEPTANCE IS, HOWEVER, CONDITIONAL: HE WANTS CHAIRMAN TO BE ELECTED BY ALL PARTY MEMBERS, NOT JUST BY CONVENTION DELEGATES, AND HE WANTS PARTY REFORMS WHICH WOULD MAKE CHAIRMAN MORE POWERFUL. NARITA APPARENTLY ASSURED HIM THAT MEETING THESE CONDITIONS WOULD BE NO PROBLEM. JSP SPECIAL CONVENTION TO BE HELD DEC 13-14 IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE THESE CHANGES, MAKE ASUKATA ACTING CHAIRMAN (PENDING FORMAL ELECTION IN MARCH) AND SELECT ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL.

3. COMMENT: ASUKATA HAS LEFT HIMSELF PLENTY OF ROOM TO REPEAT SEPTEMBER PERFORMANCE AND WITHDRAW AGAIN, IF HIS CONDITIONS ARE NOT MET. HE SEEMS TO WANT TO BECOME CHAIRMAN, BUT NOT, IF HE WOULD HAVE TO PRESIDE OVER CONTINUED INTRA-PARTY IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE. SINCE MODERATE WING IS UNABLE TO FIELD CREDIBLE CANDIDATE OF ITS OWN, WE SUPPOSE MOST OF IT WILL GO ALONG WITH HIS ELECTION, CONDITIONS INCLUDED. WHERE FIREWORKS PROBABLY WILL OCCUR IS IN ELECTION OF NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL. EACH FACTION HAS ITS OWN CANDIDATE (TAGAYA
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FOR SOCIALISM ASSOCIATION. SHOMODAIRA FOR SASAKI FACTION, UEDA FOR MODERATE NEW CURRENT GROUP), AND AT DEC 13-14 CONVENTION THEY PROMISE TO BE AT EACH OTHERS' THROATS UNLESS SOMEONE COMES UP WITH ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE CHOICE.
MANSFIELD

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